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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
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NSC FOR ABRAMS
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

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LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (7/08): "A COMPREHENSIVE DEAL OR COMPREHENSIVE WAR?"

Main Stories:

The visit of Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas to Damascus leads coverage for a second day in all dailies. On July 7, Abbas briefed Fatah leaders on the current situation in the Palestinian Territories, the Hamas/Israel truce in the Gaza Strip and on his initiative to launch a comprehensive, national dialogue, papers report. Palestinian sources described the Fatah meetings as, "positive, constructive and focused on internal reunification." Islamic Jihad leader Abdullah Shalah told Abbas during a meeting in Damascus that internal dialogue is a national responsibility that requires Arab involvement to bring Hamas and Fatah closer together, the reporting continues. Abbas also discussed Hamas' suggestions for internal Palestinian talks with Syrian President Al-Assad, coverage notes. Finally, Hamas leader Mash'al asked Secretary General of the Arab League Musa in a letter on July 7 to "intervene and explore" with Abbas possible common denominators among the parties on which to build internal Palestinian dialogue.

Front pages reveal that Palestinian Authority (PA) Premier Salaam Fayyad presented "practical ideas" to end internal division according at a July 7 PA ministerial session. Deploying Arab security forces to the Gaza Strip is the only idea revealed in the reports.

All dailies carry front page reports about Israel's "declaration of war" on Hamas charities in the West Bank. On July 8, Israeli Defense Forces "invaded" Nablus city in the West Bank and, "burst into a number of charitable societies which the Israeli soldiers claimed to be infrastructure for Hamas," the dailies note. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida leads with a large photo of a veiled woman standing amid the debris of a ransacked charity office in Nablus. Israeli Defense Forces closed four of these charities for the next four years, reporting

continues.

The Hamas/Israel truce in the Gaza Strip continues to hold despite Israeli violations, especially the refusal by Israel to allow for the entry of goods and food into Gaza, according to Hamas leader Al-Zahhar in a July 7 radio interview quoted by all dailies. In separate coverage, Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida highlight that Egypt has "vigorously" called upon Israel to honor its commitment to the truce with Hamas. Former Hamas Premier Haniyyah confirmed that a Hamas delegation will head to Cairo on July 8 to discuss the truce and the reopening of the crossing points into the Gaza Strip, the two papers conclude.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida covers news about the July 6 arrest of Israeli settlers who "tortured" a man from a village near Hebron. The newspaper's front page shows a picture the Palestinian victim with signs of torture on his body.

Front pages make a brief announcement that Germany will give 20 million Euros in emergency assistance to the Palestinian Territories to address, "deteriorating conditions" and provide the Gaza Strip with electricity.

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Independent Al-Quds prints its main, daily editorial under the title, "The Special importance of Abu Mazin's Visit to Damascus" (7/08): "...Abu Mazin met with a number of leaders from different

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Palestinian factions, but did not meet with any Hamas leaders, most notably, Hamas leader Khalid Misha'al. The reasons seems obvious... because Hamas has controlled the Gaza Strip for more than a year now through military force...some media sources note that Misha'al handed President Al-Assad a document in which he laid out the foundation for [internal Palestinian] dialogue, and [Al-Asad] must have discussed it with Abu Mazin... In view of the anticipated meeting between Misha'al and Al-Assad, we expect that things will be clearer soon... We hope that the results will be positive and that Abbas' visit will contribute to... ending the destructive [internal] division that we are experiencing in our country already destroyed by the occupation..."

¶2. Independent Al-Ayyam runs its daily editorial by Hani Al-Masri entitled, "The Winds of Truce in the Region: Prelude to a Comprehensive Deal or Comprehensive War?" (7/08): "There are lots of indications to suggest that the region is witnessing a region-wide truce similar to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli [truce]... [indications include] on-going Palestinian-Israeli negotiations despite their having reached a dead-end, the talk about [the two parties] reaching an agreement before the end of the year, ... the on-going truce in the Gaza Strip despite mutual violations... on-going Israeli-Syrian negotiations... on-going discussions about the Iranian nuclear issue... Is this truce an introduction to a comprehensive deal between the United States of America and Iran in which Washington recognizes the regional role of Iran if the latter will give up its ambitions to have nuclear weapons? Or, ...is this truce an Israeli- American attempt to marginalize the other parties in the Middle East?...It is hard to decide what is more likely - the comprehensive deal or the comprehensive war. What is certain, is that the direction of things [towards a deal or a war] will be clear by the end of this year, that is, at the end of Bush's presidency".

Wallles